

WE CLAIM:

1. A method of handling patient medical information, the method comprising:

for a patient, creating a patient-centric electronic medical record by storing a plurality of data items about the patient in a patient-centric data structure;

establishing access permissions for the medical record, wherein the access permissions are patient-controlled; and

wherein the electronic medical record is owned by the patient and includes data items associated with an arbitrary number and variety of health care providers that have been used by the patient over the patient's lifetime.

2. The method of claim 1 in which the patient-centric electronic medical record further comprises:

enabling the patient to control access to the patient-centric electronic medical record.

3. The method of claim 1 further comprising transporting the patient-centric electronic medical record over the Internet in accordance with the patient-controlled access permissions.

4. The method of claim 2 further comprising:

specifying within the patient-centric electronic medical record specific access privileges for independently for each entity, including health care providers, physicians, hospitals, insurance companies, health maintenance organizations, and government agencies that may access the patient-centered record.

5. The method of claim 3 in which the act of establishing access permissions comprises establishing a right to read the patient-centric electronic medical record, write to the patient-centric electronic medical record and copy parts of the patient-centric electronic medical record; and

wherein each of the access permission are controlled by the patient.

6. The method of claim 4 further comprising:

providing patient-determined restrictions on access privileges to specific parts of the patient-centric electronic medical record.

7. The method of claim 6 in which the restriction of access privileges are determined in part by time of entry or place of entry.

8. The method of claim 1 further comprising:
querying a legacy datastore to select legacy records related to the patient to obtain at least some of the data items about the patient;
upon determining that a selected legacy record is in a non-open source format, translating the selected record to an open source format before storing the selected record as a data item in the patient-centric electronic medical record.

9. The method of claim 5 further comprising:
using a specific client-optimized dictionary to translate legacy records into standardized terminology; and
storing the translated legacy record as a data item in the patient-centric electronic medical record d.

10. An open source medical record system using the method of claim 1.

11. The method of claim 1 in which the patient-centric electronic medical record uses a standardized vocabulary-based on the standard XML - HL7.

12. The method of claim 1 further comprising maintaining the patient-centric electronic medical record as a secure internet-based record data set.

13. The method of claim 1 further comprising:
storing the patient-centric electronic medical record in an encrypted, secure server.

14. The method of claim 13 further comprising:
decrypting the patient-centric electronic medical record only in response to a private key provided by the patient.

15. The method of claim 14 further comprising:
providing encryption/decryption software to encrypt and decrypt the patient-centric electronic medical record to a local computer on a temporary basis by the secure server; and

deleting the encryption/decryption software from the local computer when it is no longer needed to encrypt or decrypt the patient-centric electronic medical record.

16. The method of claim 1 in which costs and expenses associated with the providing and/or maintaining the patient-centric electronic medical record are hospital financed and provided to patients via their physicians and/or through a hospital.

17. The method of claim 1 further comprising:
cross-referencing summary medication lists stored as data items in the patient-centric electronic medical record to drug interaction tables and age appropriate dosage tables to reduce of medical errors.

18. The method of claim 1 in which the patient-centric electronic medical record comprises summary allergy lists.

19. The method of claim 1 further comprising:
entering data items into the patient-centric electronic medical record using wireless hand held computers.

20. The method of claim 1 further comprising:
entering data items into the patient-centric electronic medical record using "thin client" technology so that the patient-centric electronic medical record is persistently stored only on secure, encrypted servers.

21. The method of claim 15 wherein plain-text data items from the electronic medical record exist in a local computer only in volatile memory and non-volatile storage of the data items is allowed only on the server and only in encrypted form.

22. The method of claim 1 further comprising using templated data entry forms.

23. The method of claim 22 wherein the templated data entry forms comprise medical/ surgical specialty and sub-specialty specific templates.

24. The method of claim 1 further comprising using free form record entries.

25. The method of claim 1 further comprising using indexed keywords in free form record entries.

26. The method of claim 3 further comprising:

maintaining an audit trail within the medical record in which every change to a patient-centric electronic medical record is logged by date and time of entry retaining the original record, the record change and a value indicating the identity of the author or initiator of the change.